

Live Like You Were Dying Part 1: Embracing The Gift Of Life

If you are alive today, please raise your hand. If you are happy to be alive, please say "Amen!" Isn't it GREAT to be alive!

Having said that, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but the day is coming when you won't be able to raise your hand. The day is coming when this life will come to an end.

Worldwide: 3 people die every second,
180 people die every minute,
nearly 11,000 people die every hour,
more than 250,000 people die every day.

Death is a reality of life.

A woman goes to the local newspaper office to see that the obituary for her recently deceased husband is published. The obit editor informs her that there is a charge of 50 cents per word.

She pauses, reflects, and then she says, well then, let it read "Fred Brown died."
Amused at the woman's thrift, the editor tells her that there is a seven-word minimum for all obituaries. She thinks it over and in a few seconds says, "In that case, let it read, "Fred Brown died: golf clubs for sale."

The point is, as much as we enjoy being alive, eventually everyone dies.

James 4:14 "...What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."

Introduction: This life is terminal

This life will come to an end.
(And you were in such a good mood when you got here this morning)
But isn't that exactly the point! Talking about death changes your mood.
Usually, we don't want to discuss it, we don't even want to think about it.
But ignoring it or wishing it away doesn't change the reality of our impending death.

Ecclesiastes 8:8 "No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death."

It's not a question of if, the only question is when. It IS going to happen.

Therefore: Live like you were dying!
How do you do that? What should you do.
Or, to borrow a phrase from Dr. Francis Schaeffer, "How Should We Then Live?"

1. Value your life!

Don't take life for granted! Appreciate your gift of life!
Don't just exist, embrace life!

In the movie Braveheart, Mel Gibson's character, William Wallace, said, "All men die, but not all men really live!"

Can you honestly say that you are really living? Or are you merely existing?

Can you say with the psalmist;
Psalm 118:24 "This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Psalms 139:13-14

13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

You are not insignificant. This verse shows that you are custom made by the Lord Himself.

You are "wonderfully made!" Your life is a wonderful thing!

Appreciate your gift of life. Value your life.

Life is a gift from God. And specifically, YOUR life is a gift from God!

And it gets better and better!

Because, not only did God custom make you.

But also, Jesus came to help you maximize your life.

2. Jesus came that we might have abundant life.

Now, everyone knows that Jesus Christ came into this world so that we could have eternal life.

He came here so that we can go there.

He came here so that eventually we can go to heaven.

He died on the cross, to set us free from the consequences of our sin.

His death makes eternal life possible.

That's the number one reason He came here, but that's not the ONLY reason He came here.

Look at this great verse:

John 10:10 Jesus said, "...I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

Jesus came to give us not only eternal life in the future, but also to give us abundantly life right now!

The Lord doesn't want mediocrity for you. So, why would you settle for mediocrity?

The Lord doesn't want mundane for you. So, why would you settle for mundane?

Forget routine, forget predictable, forget ho-hum, forget average, forget tolerable, forget status-quo.....

Jesus Himself is the one who said it. He said, "I've come to give you abundant life!"

So, why settle for anything less.

Far, far too many people get to the end of their life, and look back over their shoulder and wonder, "what happened?"

They see unfinished plans and unfilled dreams, lost opportunities, things left undone....

It's like their life was on auto pilot: no intentionality, no definitive direction, no goals, no aspirations.....

Jesus has made an abundant life possible. It's there for the taking. It's YOUR'S for the taking!

Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength."

Jesus came so that you can enjoy an abundant life.

3. Therefore, live abundantly!

If you haven't figured this out yet, this sermon is not so much about head knowledge as it is about lifestyle.

It's not so much about head knowledge as it is a call to action.

So the question is: what do you DO? How DO you live life abundantly?

A. Get started.

The clock is ticking. You don't get a second shot at today.

The longest journey begins with that first step. Take the step!

You can't control what tomorrow will bring into your life, but you can control what you will bring into your life today.

Proverbs 20:4 "A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing."

You will reap tomorrow what you sow today. So get started.

If you want to have a better tomorrow, get started today!

Proverbs 6:9-11

9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?

10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest —

11 and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.

It's a financial truth. If you want to be broke tomorrow, then don't do any work today.

But that same truth applies to all areas of life.

If you want to be blessed with an abundant life tomorrow, get started on that abundant life today!

So, how do you get started? You've got to get a plan.

B. Get a plan.

There's an old saying, "He who aims at nothing, usually hits it."

If you want to do nothing in life, if you want to accomplish nothing in life, if you want to be nothing in life.....then simply aim at nothing, don't have a plan.

But if you want to experience an abundant life, if you want to live life to the fullest, get a plan!

Did you see the movie, "The Bucket List"?

The characters played by Morgan Freeman and Jack Nickolson were two men who had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. So they set out to fulfill their "Bucket List."

Simply stated, a bucket list is things they want to do before they kick the bucket.

So, here's the question: What is on your bucket list?

What do you want to do with the amount of time you have left in this life?

Even if you haven't written it down, do you have something in mind?

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do.

So throw off the bowlines.

Sail away from the safe harbor.

Catch the trade winds in your sails.

Explore. Dream. Discover." -- Mark Twain

Dream a little bit. What do you want to do with your life?

I don't care how old you are. What do you want to do with the days you have left?

Isaiah 40:29-31

29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

By the grace of God, the sky's the limit!
Aim high. Dream big. Get a plan.
A. - Get started. B. - Get a plan.

C. Get out of your comfort zone.

In Tim McGraw's song "Live Like You Were Dying," the chorus says, "I went sky diving, I went Rocky Mountain climbing, I went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fu-Man-Chu...."

Now, let me be perfectly honest with you. I am not planning on doing any kind of bull riding. Not today, not tomorrow, or any other day of my life. I have ridden a mechanical bull, and that is as close as I will ever get to riding a bull named Fu-Man-Chu or Tornado or Killer or Death Wish or anything else. In fact, I don't care if the bull is named Daisy, I'm still not riding it!

And I'm guessing most of you feel the same way about riding a bull. It's just NOT going to happen. Am I right?
That's OK.
Because it's NOT about you living someone else's Bucket List.
It's about you having your own Bucket List.

Maybe there are some things that you would LIKE to have on your list, but simply aren't there. Why not?
For some of you it's because somewhere in your past you were told you could never do that. Or maybe you convinced yourself that you couldn't do that. Nonsense!
Don't let anyone else sell you short.
And don't sell yourself short.

Be willing to get out of your comfort zone.
Be willing to try something that might stretch you just a little.
Be willing to break free of your routine.

Consider this example of the Apostle Peter:

Matthew 14:26-29

26 When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

What is your "boat"? What is your security blanket? What are you clinging too?
What is your excuse for not doing that which you've always wanted to do?
Isn't it time you gave it a try?

If not, why not? If not now, then when?

Author Charles Swindoll conducted a survey of folks over 85 years-old and asked them if they could do life over, what would be some things they would do differently. The top three answers were: 1. Spend more time meditating and reflecting
2. Take more risks
3. Spend more time on eternal issues.

We'll talk about #3, eternal issues, in the third sermon in this series.
For now, look at #2 on that list.
Take more risks. In other words, get out of your comfort zone.

You just have to decide which risks are worth taking.

Certainly there are financial constraints that some of us have. There may be some physical constraints. There may be other considerations.

But there are a lot of things in this world to do that can fit within your particular parameters. So, when are you going to do it?

4. Get a God plan.

By that I mean, apply these same three principles to your relationship with the Lord.

Get started - Some of you need to simply get started spiritually.
Some of you don't have a relationship with the Lord.
You keep saying, someday, someday. Well, why not today!

2 Corinthians 6:2 "...I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation."

There's no better time than right now to begin your relationship with the Lord.

Some of you have said that someday you are going to get more involved in the church. Why not today. It's time to get started.

Get a plan - I would encourage you to get together with one of the pastors or one of the Elders or your HomeTeam leader and discussing what you need to do to take it to the next level.

Come up with a plan that will keep you from stagnating spiritually.
Come up with a plan that will keep you growing and maturing in the Lord.

Proverbs 15:22 "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed."

What is your plan to insure that you are continuing your growth in the Lord?

Get out of your comfort zone.

That might mean going on a short term mission trip.
That might mean tithing.
That might mean joining one of our Bible studies or HomeTeams.
That might mean teaching children's Sunday School or helping with the teens.
That might mean sharing your faith with someone who doesn't know the Lord.

Luke 18:27 Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

Include God in your plans and the possibilities are limitless!

God has given you the gift of life.
Jesus came that you might have eternal life AND that you might have an abundant life.
Are you living the life God would have you live?
Why not start today?